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VII.

KORACHA CASTE.

BY

H. V. NANJUNDAYYA, M.A., M.L.

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KORACHAS OR KORAMAS.

The caste.

In the last two Census Reports of the State, it has been in a way assumed that Korachas and Koramas are two different castes; but there is strong reason to hold that the names are mere local variations for one and the same caste. The exogamous divisions among them and family names wherever they are found, and the customs such as a maternal uncle's right to the first two daughters of his sister at reduced *tera* and the payment of the *tera* amount in easy instalments spread over a number of years are all common to both the branches, who moreover speak the same language. The number of this caste, according to the last Census, was 24,228, the number of males and females being nearly equal. They are found scattered all over the State, and as a large section of them are of wandering habits, it is not easy to determine where they are chiefly located.

Name.

Their usual names are *Korama* (ಕೊರಮ), *Korava* (ಕೊರವ) or *Koracha* (ಕೊರಚ), and they sometimes call themselves *Koravanji makkaḷu* (ಕೊರವಂಜಿ ಮಕ್ಕಳು). They have acquired nicknames of *Kaḷḷa Koracha* (ಕಳ್ಳಕೊರಚರು) or *Kaḷḷa Korama* (ಕಳ್ಳಕೊರಮರು) by reason of their reputed thieving propensity.

Abbe Dubois calls them *Kaḷḷa Banṭaru* (ಕಳ್ಳಬಂಟರು), but this is not current as a name of the caste now, and was probably only a description of their predominant profession as a thieving fraternity, which he mistook to be the name of the caste.

Those that are popularly known as Korachas, say that Koramas are a different class, addicted to thieving, while those passing for Koramas resent being called by the other name which, they say, applies to a thieving class. The origin of the two words seems to be identical and there is little to choose between them as to the evil repute that they suggest.

In Telugu, they are known as *Erukulas* (ಎರುಕುಲವಾರು) a name which to their thinking carries no stigma, and which each class claims as appropriate to its own division.

They have as their title or name-ending, Setti (ಸೆಟ್ಟಿ), besides the usual ones of Appa (ಅಪ್ಪ) and Ayya (ಅಯ್ಯ); and they maintain that they belong to the 18 Phaṇas or right hand section of castes.

Korama and Koracha both seem to be derived from the verb *kuru* (ಕುರು) meaning to divine or prognosticate, and are applied to the caste on account of their profession of fortune-telling, which their women practise. Some derive these terms from a word which means a hillman (*cf.* Tamil *Kuranj* a hill country), showing that these people are a wild tribe living in jungles. But the former appears to be the more probable derivation and is in meaning equivalent to the Telugu name of the caste, namely, *Erukula* which comes from the root *Erugu* (ಎರುಗು), to know or divine.

Koravanji makkaḷu (ಕೊರವಂಜಿ ಮಕ್ಕಳು) means children of a Koravanji, that is, a female fortune-teller.

Many Koramas who are educated and live in towns repudiate the name, and call themselves Balajas or Koravanjis. The division of Koramas known as Soṇai (ಸೊಣಾಯಿ) Koramas who are pipers, in some places such as Chikmagalur, deny their identity with the main caste. But an enquiry into their habits and customs proves their unmistakable identity.

Origin.

It has not been possible to obtain information of any value concerning the origin of the caste. It is likely that they are one of the aboriginal tribes, or that they have a large proportion of blood of such tribes in their veins. Of course, in their case also, mythological or fanciful legends are not wanting to explain their origin. There is a story current that Párvati, the consort of Siva, once disguised herself as a soothsayer and that Koramas are her descendants. Another story connected with their occupation is that a Méda was asked to prepare a cradle for Párvati's child out of a serpent with its stomach filled with precious stones, but he was afraid of touching it on account of the rattling noise of the stones. Then a Koracha was asked, to do the job but he was given a knotted serpent and as the precious stones were held tightly packed in their place by the knots, he heard no rattling, and boldly took it and

split it like a bamboo and made the cradle. Both castes were thenceforth to live on bamboo wicker work; but the Méda still goes about in a gingerly manner and splits his bamboos from the bottom, whereas the Koracha proceeds to cut them from the top. As a reward for the cradle made by him, Párvati presented the Koracha with a divining rod of the bamboo and a winnow which she had been using herself for fortune-telling, and that is how this profession has come down to them.

Mythology apart, they are a wandering tribe found all over the State. That they are decidedly of Tamil origin is borne out by the language they speak, which is common to them irrespective of the place they live in, whether as Erukulas in the Telugu country, as Koravas in the Tamil tracts, as Koramas or Korachas in the Kannada parts or as Koravis or Kaikaris in the Mahratta country.

Abbe Dubois is of opinion that their customs and manners have much in common with those of wandering tribes known in England and France as Gypsies or Bohemians, and that they might have come into this country from Egypt. But the conclusion is far-fetched and Koramas of this State do not show the least traces of such a distant origin.

They speak a language which appears to be a dialect of Tamil or a medley of Tamil, Telugu and Kannaḍa, the first element preponderating. It is not easily intelligible to common people, and like all criminal tribes they have a slang of their own which the uninitiated cannot understand. They are said to have, says Mr. Rice, a peculiar gypsy language of their own with a system of signals which enables them to converse with the initiated, unobserved. * Language.

There are four main divisions which, though originally based on occupations, have become endogamous at present. They are úru or Dabbe Korachas (ಊರು ಕೊರಚರು, ದಬ್ಬೆ ಕೊರಚರು), Uppu or Ghaṭṭada Korachas (ಉಪ್ಪು ಕೊರಚರು, ಘಟ್ಟದ ಕೊರಚರು), also known as Ettina Korachas (ಎತ್ತಿನ ಕೊರಚರು), Kunchige Korachas (ಕುಂಚಿಗೆ ಕೊರಚರು) and Soṇai Korachas (ಸೊಣಾಯ್ ಕೊರಚರು). There said to be also Pàtrada Korachas (ಪಾತ್ರದ ಕೊರಚರು) and Súḷe Korchas (ಸೂಳೆ ಕೊರಚರು). Endogamous divisions.

Úru Korachas are so called because they have settled down within towns and villages. They are agriculturists

* Mysore Gazetteer. I., 233.

but also make baskets, and their women practise tattooing and fortune-telling. They are styled Dabbe Korachas as they prepare bamboo baskets and other wicker work. Uppu Korachas trade in salt and are known also as Ghaṭṭada Korachas, because before the introduction of railways, they were the chief carriers of trade between the sea-coasts and the interior of the country above the ghats. Ettina Korachas use bullocks more than donkeys as beasts of burden, and they have incurred notoriety as cattle-lifters. Kunchige Korachas are those who manufacture *Kunchige* or the brush used by weavers for starching their yarn. Soṇai* Korachas get their name from a wind instrument (a pipe called *soṇai* in their dialect) on which they play.

Except Úru and Soṇai Korachas who are almost settled and live within villages, the rest are more or less reputed to be thieves and are known by the nickname of *Kaḷḷa* or thieving Korachas.

Exogamous divisions.

They have four exogamous divisions:—Sátpáḍi (ಸಾತ್ಪಾಡಿ), Kávaḍi (ಕಾವಡಿ), Ménpáḍi (ಮೇಱಪಾಡಿ), Menḍragutti (ಮೆಂಡ್ರಗುತ್ತಿ). They say that the people of Sátpádi division regard the Kakke plant (ಕಕ್ಕೆ, in Telugu, ರಾಲಿ) as sacred and those of the Kávaḍi, the Margosa tree, and that they set up stones to represent their family gods underneath these trees, to worship them. The meanings of these terms are obscure and is said to be connected with the various services performed to the god (Venkataramanaswami) at the shrine of Tirupati. It is stated that *Sátpáḍi* are so called because they adorn their god with flowers and jewels, this process being in Tamil styled *Sátpádi* which is equivalent to *Samarpaṇê* in Sanskrit. *Kàvaḍi* means a carrying pole and the people of this division are said to have carried their offerings to their god, suspended to a pole at both ends. *Mènpáḍi* division sing praises of god before the idol; and *Menḍragutti* division offer shoes to the idol.

Sátpáḍi and Kávaḍi are said to be the only two proper divisions, the other two Menḍragutti and Ménpáḍi being the late immigrants from Bandar country (Krishna District), belonging to these main divisions. They received separate names, and even now, in some places, it appears that

* They may be easily identified as the snake-charmers who, come begging playing on their pipes. with cobras which they exhibit before houses.

intermarriages between Sátpáḍi and Menḍragutti or Kávaḍi Ménpáḍi are not allowed; but this distinction is not long kept up.

Korachas have also what are known as family or house names, which however have no significance in marital relations. Some of these names are appended. They have no hypergamous divisions.

Birth ceremonies. The ordinary Korachas do not observe any elaborate birth ceremonies. Soon after the child is born, it is washed in lukewarm water, and sometimes the mother is also given a bath and made to lie flat, the waist being tightly bandaged. She is given the usual heating medicines to help her recovery. On the 5th or the 7th day, she and the child are bathed. The whole house is cleaned with cowdung water and some castemen are invited to a dinner. In the evening of that day, the child is put into a cradle and is given a name. Toddy, arrack and even foreign liquors are freely used on this occasion.

Their names are generally taken from those of their gods and goddesses which include many sylvan deities. The following may be taken as typical, both for males and females.* *Sunka* (ಸುಂಕ), *Mára* (ಮಾರ), *Honnúra* (ಹೊನ್ನೂರ), *Hanuma* (ಹನುಮ), *Malla* (ಮಲ್ಲ), *Yalla* (ಯಲ್ಲ) and *Mácha* (ಮಾಚ), nicknames such as, *Júla* (curly haired), *Soṭṭa* (crooked) are common

When a child is born after the death of one or more children, a peculiar custom is observed in some places. Soon after the purification bath is taken, the mother either really or nominally goes begging to a few houses to perform a vow previously taken to Venkatramaṇa (of Tirupati) or other family deity, while the father follows her

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* In the Dravidian languages, the same name may be used for both sexes, but the sex is always distinguished by the ending, masculine ending in *a* (ಅ) and the feminine in *i* (ಇ). Except in familiar intercourse, an honorific suffix is always, especially in the higher castes, added, which may be either general such as *appa* (ಅಪ್ಪ-father), *ayya* (ಅಯ್ಯ from Sanskrit *arya*, elder or sir), *aṇṇa* (ಅಣ್ಣ, brother), or professional or caste-denoting, such as *sástri*, *dikshita* for Brahmins, *arasu* or *raje-arasu* for the Arasu (or kingly castes), *seṭṭi*, *gauḍa*, *náyaka* for other castes, and *ráv* indifferently for Brahmans, Mahrattas, Sudras, etc.

For female names, the variety is not so great, the terminations being *amma*, *avva* (ಅಮ್ಮ, ಅವ್ವ, mother), *akka* (ಅಕ್ಕ, sister), and *ammaṇṇi* (ಅಮ್ಮಣ್ಣಿ, a dimunitive form, to denote dearness, of *amma*), the latter being specially employed by the Arasu community and those who imitate them.

with the child in his arms. Out of the money collected, a silver or a copper necklace is made and put round the child's neck. The nose is bored and a ring inserted in the hole; and the child is given a name to denote that he has been born for the sake of begging or by begging.*

There is no custom of giving two names to the child, one for ceremonial purposes and the other for everyday use. But it is a notorious fact that the Korachas who engage themselves in the profession of thieving have a number of *aliases*, and they have an understanding among themselves as to which should be employed on each occasion, so that the deception may not be discovered, even if the other members of the gang are separately questioned about the names of their associates.

Couvade. The Korachas seem to have traces of the custom called *Couvade*, according to which, when a wife is delivered of a child, the husband is confined to bed and treated as a delicate patient. The practice seems to be dying out, and exists only in remote parts in the Shimoga District and elsewhere. These people were questioned in Hiriyur, Sira, Maddagiri, Kankanhalli, Mulbagal and Goribidnur Taluks but they were generally unwilling to admit its existence without a round-about cross-examination. There is a proverb in Tamil which means that when a Korama woman brought forth a son, the Korama man ate assafetida. † Even where the usage has not disappeared, they now only nominally follow it, giving the husband a little of the medicines prepared for the wife. ‡

Adoption. When a man has no children he may adopt a boy, preferably the son of a brother or one belonging to the same exogamous division. But a brother cannot be adopted. There is no ceremony observed except that of taking off the old waist thread (ಉಡಿದಾರ) of the boy and putting on a new one and giving a dinner to the caste people, to announce the fact.

Marriage. Marriages are generally celebrated after puberty. A woman may, without incurring any social odium, remain

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* Such as *Tirupatigāḍu* (ತಿರುಪತಿಗಾಡು) or *Tirupāniki-puṭṭinavāḍu* (ತಿರುಪಾನಿಕಿಪುಟ್ಟಿನವಾಡು).

† ಕುರತ್ತಿ ಪುಳ್ಳೆಪೆತ್ತಾಲ್ ಕುರವನ್ ಪೆರುಂಗಾಯಂ ತಿನ್ನಾನ್.

‡ The late Mr. G. Krishna Rao made some enquiry on this matter while he was Superintendent of Police in Shimoga, and furnished a short account, which has been published by the Superintendent of the Madras Museum, in a Bulletin. (Vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 115-116).

unmarried. If she should be discovered to have gone astray, she is made to join the man, in *kúdike*, if he is of the same caste. If the paramour is of a different but higher caste, her fault may be condoned by a fine, but if he happens to be of a lower caste, she loses her caste.

Polygamy is allowed and practised to some extent according to the means of the husband, but polyandry is unknown.

In marriages, they have to avoid girls among their agnatic relations and others born in their own group, the affinity to the group being traced through males. Marriage with an elder sister's daughter is allowed, but the daughter of a younger sister cannot be taken to wife, unless by a widower. Maternal uncle's or paternal aunt's daughter may be married; but in the case of the paternal aunt's daughter, if his father or paternal uncle (younger or elder) has already married a daughter of hers, the other cannot be married by him (the nephew). Marriages in the section in which one's own mother or father's mother was born are allowed, but not in the section in which one's own mother's mother was born, as the latter generally happens to be of one's own section. A man may marry two sisters, but not simultaneously. It is said that if a man has married the younger of the two sisters, the elder cannot afterwards be taken to wife, either in regular marriage or in *kúdike*, on the ground that the relationship as wife's sister (ಅತ್ತಿಗೆ) is looked upon as equivalent to that of a mother thus rendering marriage with her incestuous. Two sisters may be married by two brothers. The only other formula not covered by the rule of exogamy is that the intended couple should not be related, either actually, or by analogy as parent and child or as brother and sister. There is no objection to exchange of daughters between two families in marriage.

It is a binding custom among the Korachas that the first two daughters of a woman must be given, on a reduced *tera*, to her brother to be married either by himself or to his sons. If he has no sons and does not himself stand in need of the girls for marriage, his right to them is exercised by his getting two-fifths of the *tera* amount payable for each of them at their marriage, but if he takes them, he pays only 12 pagodas each, while the usual tera is 20 pagodas.

This is one of the few castes in which the wife may be older than the husband by months and even, though rarely, by years. This is explained by them as owing to their disinclination to forego their right to marry a sister's daughter which is universally recognised in the caste.

There are no impassable bars to marriage imposed by religious or professional considerations, but they usually contract marital relations only with families that are known to one another and that are already so connected. Such of the caste as have long given up criminal and predatory habits, and have settled in towns and villages owning houses and other property, will not naturally enter into alliance with their castemen, who are still notoriously addicted to such habits.

The Korachas who have adopted settled habits, have been imitating Vakkaligas and other similar castes in their marriage ceremonial to a greater or less extent. But the wandering portion of them still retain their peculiarities. They observe no *Vilya-Sástra* (ವೀಳ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ), do not call in any band of pipers nor use the *bháshinga* (ಭಾಷಿಂಗ) marriage chaplet, and some do not even erect a marriage booth. The Brahman astrologer is consulted only to see if the stars corresponding to the names of parties agree* and to fix a day. He has no further share in the celebration of the marriage.

Monday is considered the proper one to commence the actual ceremony. On the previous Friday, the bridegroom goes to the bride's hut and presents her with a few coins, the acceptance of which signifies her consent. They are both then rubbed with turmeric paste and have a general feasting separately in their own places.

If the parties live in separate villages, the bridegroom and his party arrive at the village of the bride and pitch their hut near hers.

On the day fixed for the marriage, two fresh huts are erected, with their doors opening to the east, one being for the bride and the other for the bridegroom. Strictly speaking, this should be done though they live in houses in villages, as marriages must always take place before huts temporarily put up, but these living in towns have mostly

* This is called in Kannada as *Hesarubala* (ಹೆಸರುಬಲ), *i.e.*, agreement of names.

given up this practice. The parties are led to their huts and are anointed and bathed. They are then seated on pieces of date mats and are besmeared with turmeric. After this, they have a dinner for the castemen.

In the evening at about 6 the bride and the bridegroom are again anointed and bathed. Dressed in fresh clothes, they are made to sit facing each other on date mats between the two huts. The fringes of their garments are tied together, and between the couple two pots (ಅಂಪೇಲಿ ಗಡ್ಡು) are kept on a date mat and worshipped. They rest their hands on these pots, the hand of the bridegroom being placed over that of the bride; and each ties to the other's wrist a *kankaṇa* of woollen and cotton threads twisted together and a turmeric root, a betel leaf and a copper ring tied to it. Similar *kankaṇas* are tied to the pots also. The couple are then led to the bride's house by the bridegroom's maternal uncle or a similar relation. That night, the bride and the bridegroom observe a fast.

Early in the morning, the next day, the maternal uncle of either the bride or the bridegroom who happens to be unmarried, cuts a branch of a *Néraḷe* tree (Jambolana, and places it at a well or a water course. Five persons, two men and three married women, go there carrying two sacred pots and a light, fill the pots with water, worship them and the piece of Néraḷe wood, and bring them to the bride's hut. This branch is fixed on a small dais in front of the bride's hut and the pots are deposited on a bed of rice spread near it. Two earthen dishes filled with cotton seed and castor oil are placed on these pots and lighted and kept burning till the *dhàre* is over. It is the belief that if these lights, styled *mandapa dipa* (ಮಂಡಪದೀಪ), burn steadily, the marriage will prove a happy one. A *kalasa* is also placed there on grains of rice spread in a dish, and *púja* is made to it, a cocoanut being offered and frankincense burnt.

The bride and the bridegroom are now conducted to this place and stand facing each other, the bride looking towards the east. The bridegroom ties the *táḷi* made of a string of black glass beads round the bride's neck; and then they put handfuls of rice on each other's head. The married couple sit to a common meal (ಬುವ್ವ), with the three women and two men that have brought the sacred twig and pots, in which cooked rice, plantains, jaggory and ghee are served to them.

After this they have *Nalugu* when the bridegroom and the bride sit together and offer to each other flowers, sandal, turmeric paste and *pan-supari*, and pour *sáse* or rice* on each other. Then with the fringes of their garments tied together, and holding each other by the right hands, they are taken to bathe. They sit side by side on wooden pestles laid on the ground and water is poured on them. They go with wet clothes on and worship the *Nérale* twig by going round it thrice and falling prostrate before it.

"The pot searching" ceremony takes place next. A pot decorated with chunam lines is filled with red coloured water, and pieces of silver, copper and gold are thrown in it. The bride and the bridegroom are made to search for and pick out these pieces alternately.

That evening the bride and the bridegroom dressed in rich clothes, and the girl profusely bedecked and crowned with flowers go in state to a temple and after worship return to the bride's hut, the procession being led by a married woman carrying a lamp on her head. At the entrance of the hut, the woman waves this lamp about the couple for which service she receives a little present. The couple are then taken into the hut, given fresh clothes and served with food, which they and the three married women and two men referred to, must eat from the same dish. This is called the second *Buma* (ಬೂಮ).

Then the *Nérale* branch set up in the pandal, is removed after *pûja* from its place. Before its removal, the castemen assemble and demand presents according to the means of the parties. They begin sometimes as high as a hundred rupees, but by haggling the demand is reduced to about five or ten rupees. Occasionally when the parties are very poor, it is even compounded for a betel leaf and a nut.

The bride and the bridegroom are again besmeared with turmeric, and the mother fills the girl's garment with presents consisting of dry cocoanuts (kopra) cut in halves, turmeric roots, betel leaves and nuts, five quarter-seers of rice and five *haṇas*. They then rise from their seats with the fringes of their garments tied together and holding

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* Rice is believed to be the sign of plenty and the throwing of rice on the heads of the couple by way of blessing is meant to invoke prosperity and happiness on them. In every auspicious ceremony this is an important item.

each other's right hand. The bride transfers the presents into the cloth of the bridegroom, who keeps the rice and returns the rest to her. They salute the elders by prostrating before them and receive their congratulations accompanied with presents of money ranging from a two anna piece upwards, though rarely going to rupees. The hut erected for the husband is then pulled down and its materials and the domestic vessels contained in it are carried to some distance by the bride, who also drives at the same time her husband's donkeys to the new site. She then puts up the hut again and with five married women who accompany her, she fetches water from a well, cooks food and serves it to all the guests. This finally instals her in her new house as its mistress.

This hut is again pulled down and those who brought the materials of the hut and the milk post tie them up in a bundle, which they sink in a pond or well. They are then dismissed with presents of *pan-supari* and some money.

The amount of bride price or *tera* (or *óli* in Telugu) is 24 pagodas or Rs. 72, and in some places 20 pagodas or Rs. 60. It is said that sometimes as much as Rs. 100 has to be paid. On account of the general poverty of the caste, the payment is spread over a large number of years and it is reported to be not uncommon for a man to remain indebted to the family of his father-in-law during his whole life. Among some families, particularly among the wandering portion of the caste, the son-in-law lives near his father-in-law's hut till a child is born to him.

Among the more civilized portion of the caste, half the *tera* is paid at once, the remaining half being paid at a subsequent date or at the consummation of marriage. A widower marrying a virgin need not pay any additional amount.

The expenditure at a marriage of course greatly varies according to the means of the parties. In addition to the amount of *tera*, the average for a family in ordinary (which generally means, poor) circumstances, may be roughly estimated to be twenty rupees for toddy, twenty-five rupees as feeding charges, and twenty-five rupees for clothes and sundry purposes.

Both parties, especially that of the bridegroom, must supply the castemen with drink every day, and any omission to do so is resented and leads to quarrel.

Puberty.

When a girl attains puberty, she is considered impure for four days. During this period, she remains outside the house or hut and a separate shed, made of green leaves of *Lakkali* plant is put up for her. She is given a mat to sit on, and a branch of *Ekka* plant and an iron knife are kept always in the shed to ward off evil spirits, to whose attacks she is considered specially liable during the time. Among people living in villages and towns, the ceremony of presenting the girl with cocoanuts and other things filled in her garment, is observed every evening.

On the fifth day, two married women assist her to bathe and present her with *pan-supari*, dried cocoanut halves and some dates and Bengal gram soaked in water. Green gram and rice are separately boiled and mixed together with jaggory and made into balls of which three are given to the girl to eat, the rest being given away to two boys and two girls. There is generally a dinner to the caste. The girl takes only one meal during the day.

In the case of a girl who has attained puberty before marriage, consummation is delayed for three months after the marriage, at the end of which the husband goes to his wife's hut, a caste dinner is given, and man and wife thereafter live together.

Widow Marriage.

Widow marriage is freely allowed, and a woman may marry as many times as she pleases, provided that at the time of every subsequent marriage, her previous husband is either dead or has divorced her. The ceremony observed is very simple. The head of the caste styled *Náyak* is invited along with other caste people. In the evening of the day fixed, before the house of the woman, her intended husband presents her with a new cloth with or without some jewels in addition. The *haṇa* presented to the caste by her previous husband at marriage, is returned to his heir, and a similar sum is now given to the caste by the new husband. The Nayak then declares them husband and wife. The castemen are treated to a dinner and are regaled with toddy. The *tera* amount paid to a widow varies between from three pagodas to fourteen pagodas.

A widow cannot marry her husband's brother, but may marry any other belonging to his division or sept. It has been stated in one account that the second husband who is allowed the concession of paying a low *tera* has to support the children of the woman by her first husband,

though when grown up, they revert to the family of the first husband.

Divorce. Divorce is permitted on account of the wife's adultery. The divorced woman may marry her paramour, the latter having to pay to the previous husband not only the *tera* amount paid by him, but also the expenses of marriage.

Adultery with a man of a higher caste is generally condoned, but entails excommunication when the woman has gone astray with a man of a lower caste. It has been stated that a man of this caste who attempts to outrage the chastity of a married woman, is punished by having his head and whiskers completely shaved, and paraded in the street seated on a she-donkey, a paste of onions being previously applied to his bald crown. If he wishes to rejoin the caste, he is fined the cost of a dinner with toddy to the castemen.

They are not very strict in matters of sexual morality. But it is difficult to believe as stated in a recent publication that they sell or pledge their wives "taking them back "upon redemption of the pledge with any children born "in the interval and treating them as though nothing "had happened."* No trace of this practice as a custom, could be discovered by enquiries made in this State. It is likely that the observation is due to a hasty generalisation from some causes of sexual laxity coming to notice. But poverty and a low standard of morality account for the wives of criminals incarcerated for long terms accepting the protection of some one else, and returning to the husband after his return.

If a man has sexual connection with an unmarried girl and the fact becomes known to the caste, the pair will be married under *kúdike* form. The man pays some fine, which is spent in supplying toddy to the castemen, and gives a dinner. The pair remain separate till they go to Tirupati and have the ceremony called *tala-bálu* (ತಲೆಬಾಲು) performed there. Two or three castemen accompany them to the temple there. After worshipping at the shrine, the priest throws some rice on the heads of the pair seated together with their children, if any, on either side. They then, in their turn, pour rice on each other's heads. This fully validates their marriage, and the children born of this wedlock, whether before or after this ceremony, will

* Notes on Criminal Class by Mr. Mullaly.

be entitled to have their marriages performed in the regular fashion. The omission of this ceremony is said to leave the children in the inferior status of *Kudike-Salu* (progeny of concubinage) and they are not allowed marriage relations with those regularly born.* If a widow or a divorced woman marries another, the form of marriage is *kúdike*, but she need not undergo the *tala-balu* ceremony at Tirupati, as she has already undergone regular marriage once.

Death ceremonies.

They bury their dead. As soon as life is extinct, the body is washed and a mark is put on the forehead *náma* if a male and *kunkuma* spot if a female. Then it is covered up in a new cloth and is carried to the burial ground on a bier built of bamboos. The carriers must, if possible, be all related as agnates to the deceased. As usual, the body is placed on the ground when half-way to the burial ground, and the chief mourner going round it three times from right to left,† breaks a new pot standing by the head of the corpse, and throws about cooked rice round the bier. Thereupon the carriers change sides and take the body straight to the burial ground. They lower the body into the pit, and the chief mourner puts the first handful of earth, the others all doing likewise after him. When the grave is thus closed up, the chief mourner goes round the ground with a burning faggot of wood and quenches it at the head side of the buried body.‡ The body is buried with the head turned to the south and only the cloth in which the body has been rolled up is buried along with it. On the grave they leave a quarter anna** coin which a Holeya takes for himself. The party return home after bathing in a river or a well, and have to see a light kept burning at the place where the deceased expired.

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* This practice is in vogue only among the wandering portion of Korachas.

† For auspicious ceremonies when one has to go round in token of showing respect or worship, one goes from left to right—in the way the sun moves apparently in the sky. In unauspicious ceremonies, such as death ceremonies, one generally circumambulates in the contrary or *apasavya* manner.

‡ This is known in Telugu as *talagorivi peṭṭédi* (ತಲಗೊರವಿಪೆಟ್ಟೇಡಿ), *i.e*, placing a faggot at the head.

** This is called in Kannada *nelahága* (ನೆಲಹಾಗ) and is said properly to belong to a caste of men known as *Sudugádu Siddas* (ಸೂಡುಗಾಡುಸಿದ್ದರು) or Káti Pápas (ಕಾಟಿಪಾಪಲು) in Telugu. The Holeya collects this on behalf of the above and when they pay the Holeyas periodical visits, the latter have to pay some amount on this account.

On the third day, the chief mourner and some others of the family go to the burial ground and offer cooked rice and water to the deceased. Again on the fifth day, they similarly offer food at the grave. It is believed that the spirit of the deceased is lingering about in the bodies of crows which should eat up this food. This day all the agnates take a bath which removes the pollution. At the end of a month or at a later date within the third month, all the castemen and relations are invited to a dinner, and offerings of food are made to a *kalasa* set up in the name of the deceased.

They do not observe *srâddhas*, but during the Dasara or on the Mahalaya new-moon day—a *Kalasa* is set up in the middle of the house, new cloths, if they can afford to buy them, are kept near it, and *púja* is made to it by burning incense and breaking a cocoanut in the names of the deceased ancestors.

Social status.

Korachas were formerly a nomadic people, but many of them have now settled in towns and villages. They have no recognized head-quarters. The nomadic section are essentially a criminal class, figuring largely in dacoity, highway robbery and burglary. They go about in gangs when on their criminal expeditions, and different gangs have some means of keeping themselves informed of the movements and places of rendezvous of their allied gangs, to whatever distance they may penetrate.

Úru-Korachas live in houses similar to those of other castes of their own standing, but the wandering Korachas live outside the villages in temporary huts of arched covering like the top of a country cart, the bent bamboos being stuck in the ground, so as to leave a breadth of about four feet. They encamp in groups and when they shift their places, they carry away their huts on their bullocks. The thieving gangs generally select their places for camping in the jungle.

They have no objection to take into their fold persons male or female, of other castes, such as Vakkaligas, Baṇajigas or Kurubas, who are admittedly higher in social scale. * Some accounts say that the convert must be one belonging by birth to the right hand group (18 Phaṇas), to which the Korachas belong. Some ceremony is observed at the time of admission. The candidate after a bath gets

* It is said that a Brahman will not be admitted into their caste.

his tongue slightly touched with a burnt piece of gold or a margosa stick. Sometimes he has to swallow a little of turmeric and soapnut paste. He gets *tírtha* and *prasáda* in a temple, and afterwards gives a dinner to the castemen, with whom he also eats sitting in the same line, after the headman has publicly announced his admission. In the evening the castemen are generally regaled with toddy at the expense of the new-comer.

They are not required to employ Brahmans for their marriages or any other ceremonial purposes. But some of them, settled in towns, occasionally call in Brahmans chiefly as a mark of respectability, and when any Brahman does go to minister to them, he is not subjected to any social disability.

In social position, they rank very low, although they belong to the right hand group of castes known as the Eighteen Phaṇas. In the bell and the spoon, the insignia of the Eighteen Phaṇas which is always kept in the custody of the Chalavádi,* the professional symbol of the Korachas, namely, the splitting knife, is engraved, and the Chalavádi carries the insignia in their processions and other solemn occasions. The Korachas are admitted only into the outer portions of the houses of Brahmans, and actual bodily contact with them is avoided. When a congregation of all the castes takes place in a temple, the Korachas occupy a place only next above the Nàyindas (barbers) and Agasas (washermen) and do not enter the inner portion of the temple. They can live in the same quarter of the village which other non-Brahman classes occupy, but in large towns they usually have separate quarters. They are lower in status than the Médas, another class of workers in bamboo. The Korachas who follow this profession can be singled out from the Médas from the absence of *Trisúla* or trident engraved in their (Korachas') knife. As regards dining, the only classes who eat in the houses of Korachas are Holeyas and Mádigas.

They eat sheep, goats, pigs, the larger species of the lizard class and fish of all kinds. They do not eat beef or kill snakes and monkeys. They indulge rather excessively in drink, using both country and foreign liquor.

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* Chalavadi, who is a Holeya in caste, is the servant of the group of castes coming under the Eighteen Phanas. He is the custodian of the symbol of this section, the bell and the ladle, on which are engraved the several insignia of the castes composing it.

The Uru and other settled divisions of the Korachas have a Seṭṭi and a Yajman as their tribal functionaries, who enquire into and settle their disputes. Their presence is necessary in all marriage and other ceremonies. They are said to belong to the right hand division, that is, Eighteen Phaṇas and as such are under the jurisdiction of the Dêsa Seṭṭi. **Tribal organization.**

The wandering Korachas are divided into several gangs at the head of each of which is a *Náyak* or headman. The office of this man is not hereditary but goes to the most competent among them. He commands much respect in the community and settles all the disputes among them. When they divide their predatory gains, the Náyak gets an extra share and in return, it is incumbent on him to use every endeavour to obtain the release of any one of the gang that may be caught and cast in prison, and to make proper arrangement for the maintenance of the convict's wife and children. Periodically members of all the gangs meet at a known rendezvous and settle their caste disputes. Such meetings continue for several days and the toddy and arrack shops in the vicinity drive a good trade.

The general Hindu law is applied to them in matters of inheritance. But in the case of those not regularly settled in towns, they rarely have property sufficient to raise any questions of dispute, and as such property that they have is generally of a kind not to bear too close an investigation as to its origin, the disputes are generally settled among themselves. The father seems to be regarded as having more power than under the ordinary law, and the sons are not allowed to claim a share against his wish. They settle disputes by caste meetings, and the decisions are enforced by pain of social ostracism. **Inheritance**

The divisions named above, are occupational. Uru Korachas used to trade in earth salt and even now in the places where it is prepared, they buy it up from the Upparas or salt makers and retail it to the villagers. The trade however has almost disappeared owing to the competition of sea salt. Now they have settled down to agriculture, and are hardly distinguishable from the other agriculturists, unless it be from the soothsaying and tattooing which their women still practise. The Korachas of this division are also known as *Dabbe* or Bamboo Korachas, and they make mats, winnows, sieves, cradles and baskets of all kinds and sizes. The Ghaṭṭada or Uppu Korachas were also **Occupation.**

formerly great traders in salt. Before the country was opened up by railway communication, they used to ply between the sea-coast and the interior with droves of pack bullocks and asses, on the backs of which their merchandise of salt and grains was transported. They used to travel from place to place with salt in caravans with their women and children, carrying the materials of their huts along with them. But improved roads and means of transport have sadly encroached on their main lawful occupation, and has driven them more than ever to thieving where they have not settled down to agriculture. In some places, however, (as, *e. g.*, Avani, in the Mulbagal Taluk, Kolar District) they still adhere to their old profession and buy imported salt in fairly large quantities in weekly fairs, and sell it in retail in the surrounding villages, thus making a scanty living for themselves.

The Korachas are included under the criminal tribes and are placed under surveillance. They generally take great precautions in carrying out gang robberies, posting sentinels and overawing the inhabitants of the village from giving help to their victims. They train their youths in the arts of lying, and subject them to the discipline of suffering pain without wincing, so that they may not easily betray their accomplices when caught. Burglaries and robberies on a large scale are often the work of Korachas, and to strike terror into the hearts of the villagers, they sometimes carry torches with them.* They are also adepts in cattle-lifting. Their women sometimes go about hawking baskets and professing to read fortunes, and collect information as to the most suitable houses for attack.

Tattooing is done by the women of the Koracha caste. Women are their patrons generally, though occasionally men submit themselves to the operation. "The tattooers "generally use pigments of black and green colour, rarely "of blue or dark green colours. They prepare these "pigments by mixing with the juice of certain plants or "herbs fine charcoal powder obtained by burning a cocoa-"nut shell and powdering it finely, or lamp-black or soot, "and adding to the mixture, before it is used, either breast "milk or water or both."†

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* See Abbe Dubois on the customs and manners of the Hindus, pp. 66-67 as to the manner of their carrying out their nefarious trade.

† See Mysore Census Report, 1901, in which an excellent account of tattooing is given.

After the tattooing operation is over, the Koracha woman asks for and gets some chillies and a little salt which she waves round the tattooed portion repeating a formula which means that by the help of such and such a god, the effect of evil eyes cast on the tattoo, by the by-standers and others including the woman herself, be removed. Then she smears this portion with turmeric powder. This is said to prevent the tattooed portion from swelling.

The designs employed in tattooing are very varied, flowers, birds and plants being the most usual. The Koracha woman generally keeps a book in which are drawn a number of figures, which she submits to the patient for selecting the pattern. There is a graduated scale of charges for each design. In addition to these modes of living, they engage themselves in catching edible birds for sale or consumption by themselves. They catch birds by means of snares or nets and sometimes by placing gum on the roosts. The women sometimes gain a pittance by begging at the doors of others.

Religion.

In the Census Report of 1901, the Korachas are classed as animists. Animism has been defined as "the belief which traces everything in the world, from the greater natural phenomena to the various diseases and misfortunes which afflict mankind, to the action of numberless indeterminate, powers or influences, among which, on the theory which gives rise to the name, the souls of departed chiefs and ancestors are supposed to occupy a prominent place." These distinctions are not, at any rate so far as the population of this State is concerned, exclusively applicable to any class or caste. The performance of Sráddhas and other similar ceremonies shows that the highest classes are not free from this belief. But as we go down in the scale, the belief in spirits and the practice of offering worship to them is found to assume more and more importance. Koracha class can hardly be regarded as pure animists as their principal god is Venkataramaṇa of Tirupati, commonly known among them as Tirupati Timmappa. They go on pilgrimage to this shrine periodically, and as noticed already, any informal union of an unmarried girl with a man must be confirmed by the performance of the marriage rite there.

The names of the chief female deities worshipped by them are Durgamma, Máramma, Halagamma, Máthangamma, Gangamma, Maddúramma and Yellamma. The

worship of a spirit known as Munísvara, is very common in the caste. They offer sheep and goats to these deities and they eat the sacrificed animals. Each of their settlements contains a hut or other structure dedicated to one of these local gods, and they conduct the *púja* in their own manner.

They observe no fasts but keep some of the principal feasts of the Hindus, such as, the new-year's-day, Gauri feast and Navarátri. Saturdays are devoted to the worship of Venkataramaṇa. All of them, whether belonging to the wandering or the settled section, bathe on that day and if a Vishṇu temple is near at hand, they go there and offer fruits and flowers and get *prasáda* before they eat their food.

They have faith in sorcery, but they consult no soothsayers. As the Koracha women are professional soothsayers, their want of faith in their own trade is significant. But they have an implicit belief in omens, and it is said that, whenever the Korachas propose going on their depradatory excursions, they offer *púja* at their temple and pray to be favored with good luck. The omens and the significance attached to them are the same as for other castes who share the superstition, and they are such as the chirping of a lizard, sneezing, and the crossing of snakes, cats and other animals, when one starts on any business. Indeed, there is a regular code of omens on which the elder members are an authority, and the rules are even collected in printed books.

Miscellaneous.

Korachas get themselves tattooed. A woman may get tattooed any time before she becomes a mother. It is said that at the time when she gets tattooed for the first time, her paternal aunt is invited to a dinner. She is presented with a new *sádi* and the day is observed as a feast. As regards dress, men wear short drawers, a turban and an upper cloth and sometimes a coat. They put on ear-rings styled *Métimuruvu* (ಮೇಟಿ ಮುರುವು) and silver bangles on the wrists. Women wear a *sádi*, but not a *ravike*, but among Úru and Soṇai Korachas women wear this article of dress also. The wandering Koracha women put on garlands of glass beads profusely.

APPENDIX.

‘House or family names’ of the Korachas.

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1 *Allipe* (ಅಲ್ಲಿಪೆ)
2 *Ambúdri* (ಅಂಬೂದ್ರಿ)
3 *Baḷḷaga* (ಬಳ್ಳಗ)
4 *Banḍi* (ಬಂಡಿ)
5 *Chendaru* (ಚೆಂದರು)
6 *Dósari* (ದೋಸರಿ)
7 *Gujjalu* (ಗುಜ್ಜಲು)
8 *Kampa* (ಕಂಪ)
9 *Khádri* (ಖಾದ್ರಿ)
10 *Lósari* (ಲೋಸರಿ)
11 *Mallelu* (ಮಲ್ಲೆಲು)
12 *Mandalu* (ಮಂದಲು)
13 *Maramánu* (ಮರಮಾನು)
14 *Móṭa* (ಮೋಟ)
15 *Penamaḍi* (ಪೆನಮಡಿ)
16 *Púlu* (ಪೂಲು)
17 *Pyàrama* (ಪ್ಯಾರಮ)
18 *Ráyitaru* (ರಾಯಿತರು)
19 *Uligutólu* (ಉಲಿಗುತೋಲು)
20 *Uyyáli* (ಉಯ್ಯಾಲಿ)
21 *Vémudri* (ವೇಮುದ್ರಿ)